



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy

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DMME Proposes Amendments to Safety and Health Regulations Governing Mineral Mines

- Technical corrections and amendments for clarity, consistency and improved safety resulting from periodic review -

RICHMOND, VA - Safety and health regulations governing mineral mining activities are being amended by the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) following a periodic review of state regulations. The amendments would make technical corrections, clarify unclear language, update references, make the regulation internally consistent and consistent with the Code of Virginia, and strengthen certain provisions relating to mine safety for those who live near or work in mineral mines.

A public hearing on the proposed amendments will be held November 12, 2008, at 10 a.m. at the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy office located at the Fontaine Research Park, 900 Natural Resources Drive, Charlottesville, VA. Both oral and written comments may be submitted at that time. The public comment period on the proposed amendments ends December 26, 2008.

Sections to be strengthened relate to blasting, mine rescue, and construction and maintenance of mine buildings. DMME intends to add a section requiring drill logs for boreholes intended for blasting. The agency also intends to amend sections dealing with blasting to require: 1.) reporting of flyrock incidents; 2.) review of drill logs before blasting; 3.) that areas containing loaded boreholes be posted as well as barricaded, if not guarded; 4.) that drill logs be kept as part of the blast record; and 5.) that electronic detonation systems be of an approved type.

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Regarding underground rescue in mineral mines, the agency intends to amend and generally strengthen sections dealing with mine rescue stations, equipment, crews, and self-contained breathing apparatus. Also for the purpose of improved safety, the agency intends to add one new section requiring that buildings be substantial and well maintained.

The proposed action will provide certain advantages to the public, particularly those who live near or work in mineral mines. Strengthening sections dealing with preparations for blasting and requiring mine operators to have a plan to control the affects of blasting on adjacent properties are intended to better control the effects of blasting on the public. The strengthening of mine safety provisions such as those dealing with underground mine rescue and self-rescue devices will improve worker safety. Correcting existing unclear, inconsistent, or incorrect language will make the regulation more accurate and easy to understand.

In addition to the public hearing, anyone wishing to submit written comments may do so by mail, email or fax to David B. Spears, Regulatory Coordinator, Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, 202 North Ninth Street, Richmond, Virginia 22903; email David.Spears@dmme.virginia.gov; or fax 804-692-3237. Written comments must include the name and address of the commenter. In order to be considered, comments must be received by December 26, 2008.

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